



**“RENEWING *the* PROMISE *of* SYRACUSE”**

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**A 50 Point Plan for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century City**

# *the* PLAN

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**As Mayor, I will strive to improve the quality of life in the City of Syracuse by developing and implementing progressive policies steeped in innovation, transparency, community engagement, and a zeal for bold, equitable leadership that provides 21st Century responses to Syracuse's 21st Century challenges and opportunities.**

My 50 Point Plan will cover six major policy areas: Economic Development and Job Creation, Education and Youth, Public Safety, Sustainability and the Environment, Community Development, Housing, and Neighborhoods, and Government Modernization and Efficiency. Within each of these six areas I will outline broad goals and the specific strategies which collectively will create a critical mass of public action. This outline will provide clarity to city government that will bring transparency for our citizens, predictability for business people, and a cohesive plan of action that will drive the operations of a united city workforce toward a cogent vision. The policy strategies found herein will also pull from best practices found in cities around the country and around the world. These areas provide the framework for a platform that will usher in an era of innovation and vigor in city government.

While setting goals and defining strategies that will bring about the change our community so desperately needs, the links between these policy areas will also be clearly illustrated. Focused solutions and targeted actions in each area will be imperative to achieve significant results, but it is this holistic and integrated approach to governance that will bring about synergistic impacts and lasting change. Throughout this document you will find an emphasis on coordination within city government that gets departments and their personnel out of their traditional silos and into a more dynamic and creative atmosphere. This atmosphere will be the engine that creates efficiencies in the government and generates multi-disciplinary solutions to meet the complex problems our city faces.

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## ***Section One***

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT *and* JOB CREATION**

## ***Section Two***

**EDUCATION *and* YOUTH**

## ***Section Three***

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

## ***Section Four***

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING *and*  
NEIGHBORHOODS**

## ***Section Five***

**SUSTAINABILITY *and* the ENVIRONMENT**

## ***Section Six***

**GOVERNMENT MODERNIZATION *and*  
EFFICIENCY**



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## Section Two

# EDUCATION *and* YOUTH

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**Syracuse** has always been a great place to raise a family. With incredible diversity, a plethora of park facilities and open spaces, sports teams like the Chiefs, the Crunch and the Orange, top notch hospitals, museums like the MOST and the Onondaga Historical Association, and invaluable arts and culture establishments our city has all the makings of a great childhood.

In order to have a truly great childhood, however, our kids need the education and youth services that give them the greatest possible opportunities for success in the future. We know that the challenges faced by children and families in some of our neighborhoods are significant. We know that parental unemployment, generational poverty, nutritional issues and crime all stand as barriers to kids' educational success and success in life. As these challenges are often layered one on top of the other, it is clear that for many of Syracuse's children it is an uphill battle.

We must take steps to give all of our children a better shot. Every child deserves the opportunity to reach their dreams regardless of what their family's income might be, what neighborhood they live in, or what race or ethnicity they are. We must continue to work to level the playing field for all children in Syracuse.

The City of Syracuse must continue to work collaboratively to bring sound educational, recreational, after school and other support services to the children of the city. We need to work in partnership to create a continuous network of programming that will keep our children from slipping through the cracks. The City of Syracuse, the Syracuse City School District, Onondaga County's Department of Social Services and innovative and transformational programs like the Westside Community School Strategy and the Say Yes to Education initiative can help create this comprehensive network for our kids.

I drafted, co-sponsored, and helped pass the Say Yes to Education program for Syracuse city schools because I believe it has the potential to drastically improve our kids' abilities to succeed while simultaneously providing an incredible incentive for families to move to or stay in the City of Syracuse. This legislation provided \$1 million to help prepare inner city students for college, as well as help pay for college tuition. Syracuse is now a national model for this program and because of Say Yes, more than 600 Syracuse high school students will attend college for free this fall.

We are already beginning to see the impact the Say Yes to Education program is having. Our children are going off to excellent colleges and universities for free, the Say Yes program is being marketed with homes for sale in the city, and new families are coming into our community to buy those homes and raise their children. Support services provided through this program are also coming to fruition as summer camps are underway and after school programs are ready for the start of the new school year.

The Say Yes to Education is the flagship of what must be an innovative and holistic strategy for providing greater opportunities for our young people. Only a fully integrated approach that considers all points of contact between government services and our families and children will bring lasting change. Say Yes to Education, the Westside Community Schools Strategy and other innovative programming properly coordinated with other public services can help provide the brighter future that all of Syracuse's children deserve.



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## *Section Two*

# EDUCATION *and* YOUTH

*(summary)*

### ***GOALS***

- **Fully implement the Say Yes to Education Initiative.**
- **Make our City Schools the centerpieces of our neighborhoods.**
- **Improve overall academic performance in the Syracuse City School District.**
- **Improve graduation rates in the Syracuse City School District.**
- **Improve public perception of the Syracuse City School District.**

### ***STRATEGY #10***

Continue to fund the Say Yes to Education program at higher levels to create a fully integrated, robust program.

### ***STRATEGY #11***

Take a lead role in the Say Yes to Education programming by working with the SCSD, Syracuse University and the Say Yes to Education coordinators to fully implement its programming and marketing.

### ***STRATEGY #12***

Fully complete the school reconstruction project on a reasonable timetable.

### ***STRATEGY #13***

Work more cooperatively with the Syracuse City School District administration and Board of Education to achieve more synergistic planning, budgeting, programming and curriculum.

### ***STRATEGY #14***

Further pursue the community school concept by using our schools to facilitate full-day programming including after-school activities for children, adult education and vocational training, workforce development, social services, community policing, and other City- and County-level public services.

### ***STRATEGY #15***

Integrate school programming, community policing, truancy programs, and local youth programs to achieve holistic youth targeting to reduce dropouts, reduce youth violence, and improve school retention and achievement.

### ***STRATEGY #16***

Examine how alternative administrative methods might achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in our City's schools.

## Section Two

# EDUCATION and YOUTH

(cont'd.)

### GOALS

- **Embrace innovative strategies to reduce crime in our city.**
- **Reduce both violent and property-related crimes in our neighborhoods.**
- **Minimize crime rates in and around our neighborhood business districts and downtown.**
- **Strengthen the relationship between our police force and grassroots community members.**
- **Continue to provide world class fire protection and emergency medical services.**

### STRATEGY #10

**Continue to fund the Say Yes to Education program at higher levels to create a fully integrated, robust program.**

Say Yes to Education, Inc. is a national, non-profit education foundation committed to dramatically increasing high school and college graduation rates for our nation's inner-city youth. Say Yes provides comprehensive supports, including the promise of a full college or vocational education, aligned with what research indicates is needed to enable every child in the program to achieve her or his potential. This program has been instituted in schools around the country, but Syracuse is the first community to have the program

implemented throughout its entire school district.

As such it will be important for this program to be funded at adequate levels to be a true success. On the Common Council I have drafted, co-sponsored and helped pass legislation to provide funding for the Say Yes program. We must continue to provide support to this invaluable program in order to make sure that it is accomplishing what is necessary to give our kids the keys to success.

Fortunately, part of what makes this program so exciting is its ability to tap into different sources of funding for its program operations. This foundation has already received financial support from the City of Syracuse and the Syracuse City School District, Syracuse University and other public and private colleges and universities, and as a foundation Say Yes also takes advantage of other sources such as private donations.

This model will help provide fiscal sustainability to the program so long as each organization involved continues to provide support. The City of Syracuse must be a strong supporter of this program that has so much potential to transform the city and offer such critical support to our young people.

### STRATEGY #11

**Take a lead role in the Say Yes to Education programming by working with the SCSD, Syracuse University and the Say Yes to Education coordinators to fully implement its programming and marketing.**



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## Section Two

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(cont'd.)

We are all aware of the challenges that exist in many of our neighborhoods. With strong leadership and key partnerships, the Say Yes to Education program may help our young people get the step up they need.

The Say Yes Foundation recognizes four primary barriers to post-secondary access for disadvantaged youth: Social/Emotional Obstacles, Health Obstacles, Academic Obstacles, and Financial Obstacles. The Say Yes program develops programs and partnerships that attack these obstacles through early intervention, tutoring, summer programs, partnerships for health care and social services, legal services, and free tuition to students who are accepted at participating two and four year colleges and universities. This initiative will provide the comprehensive and continuous programming that will help carry our children from pre-kindergarten through high school graduation, and give them the ability to overcome the largest single barrier to achieving post-secondary education for lower income students – the cost of tuition, fees and books.

The power of this program can not be overstated. The Say Yes program has the power to transform our city over the years as we attract new residents and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty in our neighborhoods. The next Mayor must provide strong leadership to help build the momentum this program already has to further support our city's parents, teachers, social workers, police and youth volunteers in providing a brighter future for our children.

### **STRATEGY #12**

**Fully complete the school reconstruction project on a reasonable timetable.**

The school reconstruction program that the Syracuse City School District is undertaking will be an incredibly important aspect of the city's success in years to come. Having poor school facilities can

drastically deter a community's ability to attract and retain residents, and having high quality facilities can serve as a major asset. Investing in our schools provides increased opportunities for better educational and multi-service offerings that can create a clearer path to success for our children. Making such investments also sends a clear message to our children that we care. While seemingly trivial, this statement is extraordinarily important in the lives of our young people. We need to communicate to them that this community cares about them, cares about their futures and wants them to succeed.

Quality school facilities also play a role in attracting and retaining young professionals as well as families who want to take advantage of myriad services that state of the art facilities have to offer. By creating and marketing top flight school facilities we can show prospective residents that we place a premium on education. That capital investment will reap benefits for our city for years into the future as young people and new families choose to come to or stay in our community because of the quality of facilities available for their children and their other service needs.

It will also allow us to pursue a community school model that holds our schools up as the centerpieces of our neighborhoods. This is a project with incredible potential. The Syracuse community has embraced the project and we must now find a way to move forward to bring the benefits of this effort to fruition. The city must provide the leadership to make this project real for the many Syracuse parents that have waited to see their children go into better schools each day.



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## Section Two

# EDUCATION and YOUTH

(cont'd.)

Strong leadership that places an emphasis on decisive action, fiscal responsibility and smart long-term investment will bring this important project to realization for the children and families of our city.

### STRATEGY #13

**Work more cooperatively with the Syracuse City School District administration and Board of Education to achieve more synergistic planning, budgeting, programming and curriculum.**

The operations of the Syracuse City School District are as critical to the success of our city as any of the departments of the city or county governments. It is important for our Mayor and our city government to be fully engaged with the Syracuse City School District throughout the year and across operational functions. Consistent communication with the school district is crucial to effective planning, coordination or programming and budgetary responsibility.

Leadership of city government and of the school district must be closely tied in order to lead a concerted public effort to lift up our city. No longer can the city administration and the school district blame each other for the setbacks that we experience as a community. Everyone, especially the Mayor, must take responsibility for the success of our children and our city.

As Mayor I will personally foster this communication by reaching out to the school superintendent and by making sure that appropriate city staff members are in constant communication with their school district colleagues. Persistent communication, coordination and leadership will ensure that the students, parents, teachers and administrators of the Syracuse City School District will have the resources they need to succeed.

### STRATEGY #14

**Further pursue the community school concept by using our schools to facilitate full-day programming including after-school activities for children, adult education and vocational training, workforce development, social services, community policing, and other City- and County-level public services.**

Improving the condition and capabilities of our schools is an incredibly important step to giving our children greater opportunities to achieve academic success. But the potential our schools hold goes beyond just giving our kids better classrooms, athletic facilities and science labs. Our schools also have the potential to be centers of public services from health care and social services to job training and legal assistance.

Our schools should be the centerpieces of our neighborhoods. By implementing progressive public and social service models that reach out into our neighborhoods to connect with clients we can increase the effectiveness of those programs while simultaneously creating a culture of education that makes going to school a routine and comfortable activity for people of all ages. This model can help lift up our neighborhoods with social programs while improving educational attainment and reducing dropout rates.

If we are willing to make significant investments in our school facilities, why not make them gateways to success for all those who seek to take advantage of available programs to make



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(cont'd.)

a better life for themselves and their families? We must continue to explore ways we can connect the school reconstruction program with efforts to advance progressive models for government service provision in the City of Syracuse.

### **STRATEGY #15**

**Integrate school programming, community policing, truancy programs, and local youth programs to achieve holistic youth targeting to reduce dropouts, reduce youth violence, and improve school retention and achievement.**

While increasing the capacity of our schools to provide children and families with the support they need, it is also imperative that we work to maximize all of our resources in this community to provide the strongest possible path to a brighter future for Syracuse residents. Our city is home to countless youth programs from non-profit agencies, community organizations, schools and the City Department of Parks, Recreation & Youth Programs. Offering programs that keep young people out of trouble, provide academic support, create opportunities to improve physical and mental wellness, and build a greater sense of civic awareness and responsibility in our young people is a critical function of our public and non-profit community.

We must commit to a comprehensive approach to youth services that provides support from birth through high school and college. President Obama's Promise Neighborhoods initiative, and Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone program after which it is modeled, serves as an example of this approach taking shape elsewhere in the nation. We must learn from these national best practices and be prepared to tap into any state and federal resources that may result from this trend.

Advancing the Say Yes to Education program and a community schools model will be critical to successfully creating a comprehensive service structure. We must continue to expand Say Yes and enhance its power to reach and support children and families to provide greater opportunity for educational attainment and personal success.

### **STRATEGY #16**

**Examine how alternative administrative methods might achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in our City's schools.**

Observing and learning from best practices from around the country is sound organizational practice regardless of the policy area. Education and youth services are no different. We need to take a hard look at how these services are provided in our community and compare with how such services are offered in other parts of the country.

Whether it's Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone, Michael Bloomberg's Mayoral control in New York City, or a community schools strategy we must put all options out on the table for consideration. An open dialogue about how best to serve our children can help us find answers about how we tailor the best possible methods and strategies to implement here in Syracuse. Finding the best possible systems and arrangements to help provide the greatest opportunity for our city's young people is critical to Syracuse's success.





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